



# Pure Love Works Wonders

Written by George Roberts, Father of the Bride



**Rob & Julie Filmer  
Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> May  
1993**

We are privileged to be a part of many beautiful weddings but nothing delights us more than meeting couples who have been happily married for many years after their weddings at Oakfield. This wedding, however, has a special place in our hearts. Here is true love in the face of great adversity. Julie's parents contacted me recently to tell me that they had been married, against all odds, for 15 years. This is a wedding that is embedded in my memory and is a story that needs to be told.

**R**ob Filmer, the groom, was born with diabetes. At the age of 24 he lost his sight. One cold winter's night in July, 1992, a very ill Rob was brought to the Filmer home from a conference in KwaZulu-Natal. Julie was house-sitting for his parents. While being nursed back to health his kidneys collapsed. One of the first transportable peritoneal dialysis machines used in South Africa, was imported for Rob to continue his conservation education work at the Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve. He and Julie celebrated their engagement early in 1993, planning to marry later in the year.

On their way to arrange the wedding at Oakfield Farm in April, 1993, the news broke—Rob probably had only ten to 12 months to live. I was there with Julie and her mum, arranging a wedding for a brave girl who could soon be a widow.

The owner of Oakfield Farm listened attentively and suggested that we bring the wedding forward. Due to a cancellation that morning there was a gap in less than two weeks. Two weeks? No wedding invitation cards, no wedding cake, no bridal dress, and we had not even discussed it with the groom. With no time to waste we made interim plans and awaited Rob's approval. He agreed. Certainly, this was meant to be and everything fell into place with much support and excited co-operation from family and friends. 150 guests were invited telephonically. The cake, minister, flowers and music were all arranged without a hitch. The unique Belgian lace wedding dress, worn by Julie's grandmother at her wedding, decades earlier, fitted Julie perfectly—another miracle in the process.

Saturday the 8<sup>th</sup> May, 1993, was a spectacular day in every way possible—the fine weather, the wedding ceremony and the reception. It was also Rob's mother's birthday. Words cannot express the commitment and



love between Julie and Rob, or the amazing support from all the guests. Besides 'seeing' Julie's wedding dress through his fingers, Rob says one of his favourite memories of his wedding day was hearing the guinea fowl calling throughout the service and reception.

Pure love works wonders. Fifteen years later the miracle of that marriage is stronger than ever. There are elements beyond the courage and determination to stay alive and keep on celebrating life—complete openness and integrity, true companionship with teasing and laughter; sharing the dark moments and intense discussion around profound issues, mutual gratitude and continuing to live the values of respect towards others, the environment and themselves.

This is a well-rounded relationship—both giving and receiving. Balancing Rob's deteriorating health, the compounding physical pain, heart failure and a frightening seizure at the end of October 2008, is the joy of companionship between two individuals. It has been tough and honest 'love' work, that harmonising component which is so necessary to experience bliss.